THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN BUILDING TOURISM DESTINATION IMAGE AND WILLINGNESS TO TRAVEL AMONG GENERATION Z

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

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Year 2025

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It is the work that is expected to be carried out under the supervision of **Prof. (Dr.) Yogita Sharma.**

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ABSTRACT

In normal circumstances, the term travel means when one person moves from one place to another and the reason for the same can be multiple. An individual can move with the intention of fun, work, education, or it can also be leisure. Post COVID-19 the most common pattern observed among people about tourism is “wanderlust”. Wanderlust can be referred as a phenomenon when people get bored with their mundane lives due to the lockdown and think of going to any destination for fun or leisure. It is also observed that the tourism industry has become an industry whose contribution to the country's growth has increased. At present the concept of Tourism 4.0 has become a trendsetter. When the term Tourism 4.0 comes it is regarded as the extensive usage of various platforms of social media. With the coming of the term Tourism 4.0 prospective travelers have started using social media at an increased rate. Social media is being consumed at a maximum limit in search of information during pre-travel. Travelers use social media to gather information and search various locations to decide whether to travel to that location or not. In recent times social media has also been used by various agents, hoteliers, and the government to attract prospective travelers to a particular location by portraying and framing images in the minds of the travelers. Today’s consumer market is flooded with only one age group of people who are known as GENERATION Z. Generation Z are those people who were born between 1997-2010. This study hence, aims to examine and identify what factors or variables have an impact on tourism sector in relation to social media usage. This objective will be achieved with the help of the Technology Acceptance Model. The current research will be conducted with the objective to examine the impact of content present on social media on the minds of prospective travelers. To study how social media’s content aids in shaping destination image for a particular location in the minds of prospective travelers. This research aims to analyze the moderating impact of disposable income on destination image and intention to visit a destination. The study has the objective of evaluating the influence of the content available on social media on Generation Z. For achieving the objectives mentioned above, the area of study will be chosen as NCR.

Keywords: Social Media, Generation Z, Destination Image, Technology Acceptance Model, Actual Travel Intention

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

Tourism is the phenomenon when there is movement of the individual from one geographical location to another location. Tourism can be understood as an economic, cultural, or social phenomenon in which an individual moves from one place to another for various reasons like leisure, business, and professional reasons. The travel can be national or international which means within a country or it can be from one nation to another respectively (S. Britton, 1991). It has been observed that tourism has an incredible and positive influence on the economic development, and social, and cultural enhancement of any nation (S.L.J. Smith, 2014). Tourism is considered as an economic activity which is providing benefits to the respective country in various forms.

Nowadays immense information is available on the Internet. The young generation relies more on the content available on social media when they make decisions regarding travel. All the users of social media act as patrons who can engage the audience and promote any travel destination with the help of their experiences that they post on various social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter (X. Xu and S. Pratt, 2018).

With the coming of social media, the way people can access tourist information has changed drastically (Xiang et al., 2015). There has been increasing usage of social media because social media has been used as an instrument for creating and changing perceptions, feelings, and experiences (Luo & Zhong, 2015).

As per the studies, social media has been harnessed immensely with the aspiration for gathering information which is required when making decisions relating to travel (Lin & Huang, 2006; Usui et al., 2018).

Those products and services gain immense attention from Generation Z which are immensely advertised and are rated good on social media.

A new term known as “Travel 4.0” is gaining immense popularity and places immense importance on the growing role played by social media in the tourism industry (M.Mariani, 2019; B.T.Khoa and T. Khanh, 2020).

There is immense competition in the tourism industry hence it becomes vital to make use of any technique of communication to attract prospective tourists. To make a particular destination attractive in the eyes of prospective travelers it is essential to increase the visibility

of that destination on social media (Tham, A.; Croy, G.; Mair, J, 2013). Numerous studies and research have concluded that the most important element that plays a pivotal role in the establishment of a destination image is the content, and information present on social media. On the parallel lines, various new avenues for tourism organizations have been emerged due to various information and content present and easily accessible on social networking sites. With the help of this content people belonging to the tourism industry can capitalize on destination image (Li, R.; Suh, A., 2015; Zha, X.; Yang, H.; Yan, Y.; Liu, K.; Huang, C., 2018; Shuang, Y., 2013).

Information from travelers, travel agents, marketers, and suppliers is the most vital information that leads to a destination image.

The destination image helps in deciding traveling a particular destination and it also has an impact on post-travel decisions which may involve the intention to recommend the destination to anyone else or not (Cooper, C.; Fletcher, J.; Gilbert, D.; Wanhill, S., 1993; Lee, C.K.; Lee, Y.K.; Lee, B.K, 2005).

Previous research has also concluded that information present on social media has a constructive impact on online destination image formation. Social media also influence vital decisions relating to travel.

The information available on social media can be acknowledged as a worthwhile, comprehensively examined, discovered, and reviewed source which is far better than other traditional or conventional sources like friends, family, sales representatives, suppliers, acquaintances, television, radio, advertisements, and documentaries (Gurung, D.J.; Goswami, C., 2017).

Many travel agents and tourist business houses are publishing immense content and information on numerous platforms with only one intention of reaching masses and grab their attention. Various social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have become a major source of sharing information.

The main reason behind this development is that all the business houses and individual travelers are sharing and posting immense information on social media. Information can be their feelings, personal experiences, and their feedback regarding a particular destination. These social networking sites have become popular among students, organizations, service providers, and individuals (Mangold, W.G.; Faulds, D.J., 2011).

CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 SOCIAL MEDIA

Increasingly, social media—like Facebook and Instagram—has emerged as a vital networking and marketing tool for e-commerce businesses, partly because it satisfies a fundamental human desire for social connection. With the objective of interaction, exchanging of ideas, and developing shared ideals social networking platforms are being increasingly utilized by people who think alike and share similar convictions (Mariani, M.M.; Mura, M.; Di, M., 2018). The web and advances in technology have had a major impact on how travelers receive and use travel-related information (Choe et al., 2017; Fotis et al., 2012; Buhalis and Law, 2008). With the coming of so many social media platforms, social media is not just used for searching for information but it has now become the most integral part of travel and also of journey. Users utilize it to create user-generated content (UGC), which influences other travelers' travel decisions, and to share their opinions and experiences. They rely on social media for information since their decision-making process has a higher level of ambiguity. For them, "Word of Mouse" is extremely relevant.

2.2 GENERATION Z

Generation Z is a category of people born between 1997 and 2012. The main reason to select and pick up this generation is that they are heavily dependent upon social media for every aspect of their lives. In the next five years, the marketplace, especially the tourism sector, will be flooded by this generation only. They are the generation of do-it-yourselfers.

2.3 DESTINATION IMAGE

A destination image can be understood as an accumulation of beliefs, ideas, and opinions that people have about a location or destination (Baloglu, S.; McCleary, K.W, 1999). It is an intricate combination of features and products that come together to form a whole impression, making it a subjective idea. Numerous research studies that have examined the process of creation of a destination image have concluded that destination image is a subjective concept that is impacted by the feelings and beliefs of an individual. According to previous studies it

has been concluded that traveler's attitudes and decisions regarding a location heavily depend upon the perceptions which are formed in the minds of that location (Hsu, C.H.C.; Wolfe, K.; Kang, S.K., 2004). Destination image is that variable that has the capacity and the strength to have an influence be it positive or negative on numerous factors. Hence, it becomes vital to inspect the nature and impact of destination image on the minds of prospective travelers.

2.4 TECHNOLOGY ACCEPTANCE MODEL

Technology Acceptance Model, due to its simplicity, flexibility, and understandability of the Technology Acceptance Model, several academicians and researchers have incorporated the TAM Model for conducting studies in diverse fields including tourism and travel (Renny, Guritno & Siringoringo, 2013; Huang, Backman, Backman, & Moore, 2013; Matikiti et al., 2018; Sahli & Legohérel, 2016), health care information systems (Chang, Yan, & Tseng, 2012; Pai & Huang, 2011), social net-

work (Hossain & de Silva, 2009), hotel consumers (Huang, Chang, Yu, & Chen, 2019; T. G. Kim, Lee, & Law, 2008), etc. As per the previous studies the two most substantial variables of the Technology Acceptance Model that influence the acceptance of technology and adoption attitudes of technology are perceived ease of use (PEU) and perceived utility (PU) (Davis, 1989).

With the objective and intention to measure the acceptability of new technology an extended version of the Technology Acceptance Model was introduced by Venkatesh and Davis in 2000. Hence, in the current research study extended version of the Technology Acceptance Model will be used.

2.4.1 PERCEIVED USEFULNESS

Perceived Usefulness in the Technology Acceptance Model is the variable that will aid in measuring the amount of worth an individual feels about a new technology. It will help to judge the level of easiness an individual obtains when he or she uses a new technology.

2.4.2 PERCEIVED ENJOYMENT

Regardless of any possible adverse impacts on performance, enjoyment is believed to be an "affective belief that encompasses the extent to which the activity of using the system is

perceived to be enjoyable in its own right" (Davis et al., 1992). It has a significant role in promoting information system user behavior (Van der Heijden, 2004). Additionally, it is thought to be an intrinsic motivation (Agarwal & Karahanna, 2000) and has a favorable impact on information system users' intent to reuse the system (Benbasat & Wang, 2005).

2.4.3 PERCEIVED CONVENIENCE

The measure of convenience individual experiences regarding time, location, and execution when using IT has been termed as perceived convenience (Chang et al., 2012; Yoon & Kim, 2007). This study examines the perceived simplicity and convenience of using social media for travel-related tasks.

2.4.4 SOURCE CREDIBILITY

Based on the study the most predominant component of persuasion is source credibility which means “believability" (Fogg and Tseng, 1999; Jaso, 2011). According to source credibility theory, when a source presents itself as credible, people are more likely to be persuaded (Hovland et al., 1953). Source credibility has been extensively researched in the context of Internet marketing and its relationship to consumers (Ayeh, 2015; Lowry et al., 2013). According to research, communicators with a high degree of source credibility are often respected by their audience and have a high degree of trustworthiness themselves (McCroskey et al., 1974).

This study will be done to establish the relationship between source credibility and the impact of source credibility on the amount of utilization of social media for travel purposes. The current study will be performed to determine whether people rely on the information and knowledge contained on social media whenever they are making any travel decisions.

2.4.5 PERCEIVED TRUST

Numerous scholars from various fields, such as philosophy (Barber, 1983), sociology (Putnam, 1995), economics (Koehn, 1996), marketing (Doney & Cannon, 1997), and organizational studies (Mayer et al., 1995), have investigated the topic of trust. According to some writers, "there is no other variable which so thoroughly influences interpersonal and intergroup behavior" (Golembiewski & McConkie, 1975, p. 131), trust is a complicated and multifaceted

notion (Mayer et al., 1995). The concept which is behind Perceived Trust (PT) and which explains its concept is that all the information which is available on social media whether its relating to tourism or about anything else is relevant, unbiased, and trustworthy. User-generated content and individual travelogues make up social media. The PT of the SM site measures how much passengers rely on these postings to help them plan their travels. There are various forms of social media, and each one is linked to a certain sense of reliability.

CHAPTER 3 - RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The term research methodology refers to a methodical strategy for contextualizing empirical findings.

3.1 STUDY AREA

The present study aims to analyze the usage pattern of social media among Gen Z in the Indian tourism industry, and for that objective, the area selected is NCR.

After conducting a literature review it was found that very limited studies have been conducted mainly on the utilization of social media in the Indian tourism industry that too specifically among Gen Z. Hence, the current research has the objective to bridge that gap. The area that will be covered in this research is NCR.

3.2 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The literature study also supported the numerous studies that have already been conducted on consumer perceptions of online travel agents, customer online shopping behavior, and other aspects influencing online shopping habits of consumers (AC Nielsen 2007; Blackwell, R.D., Miniard, P.W.& Engel, J.F. 2001; Chen, C. & Cole, S. 2003; Cheng Lu Wang, 2001; Chung Hoon Park, Young-Gul Kim, 2003), but not much study has been conducted to judge the influence of social media in the formation of destination image in the minds of prospective travelers. Travel agents will benefit from this study. Travel agents, lodging owners, and everyone else in the marketing and strategy-development process work to shape how potential passengers perceive a destination.

In India, very limited studies have been conducted to assess social media's influence on the travel and tourism sector. Hence the first and foremost objective of this study is to determine the elements driving social media adoption in India's tourism industry, evaluate the impact of social media on the image of destinations, and ultimately, determine how much of an impact social media has on travelers' ultimate decisions to visit those locations.

3.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This research aims to achieve the following objectives: -

1) To analyze the relationship between intention to use social media for travel purposes, Actual usage of social media, Destination Image, and willingness to travel among Generation Z by creating a conceptual model.
2) To identify the factors that influence Generation Z while utilizing social media for travel purposes.
3) To assess the impact of social media in creating a destination image among Generation Z.
4) To observe the moderating effect of disposable income on the relationship between destination image and intention to visit a destination among Generation Z.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

To achieve the objectives as mentioned above various statistical tools will be used namely percentage, frequency analysis, exploratory factor analysis, ANOVA, T-Test, and PLS-SEM.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The current research study will comprise the following variables to evaluate and assess the intention to leverage social media for the travel-related purposes

1) Perceived Usefulness
2) Perceived Enjoyment
3) Perceived Convenience
4) Source Credibility
5) Perceived Trust

The research model proposed for this study is depicted below: -

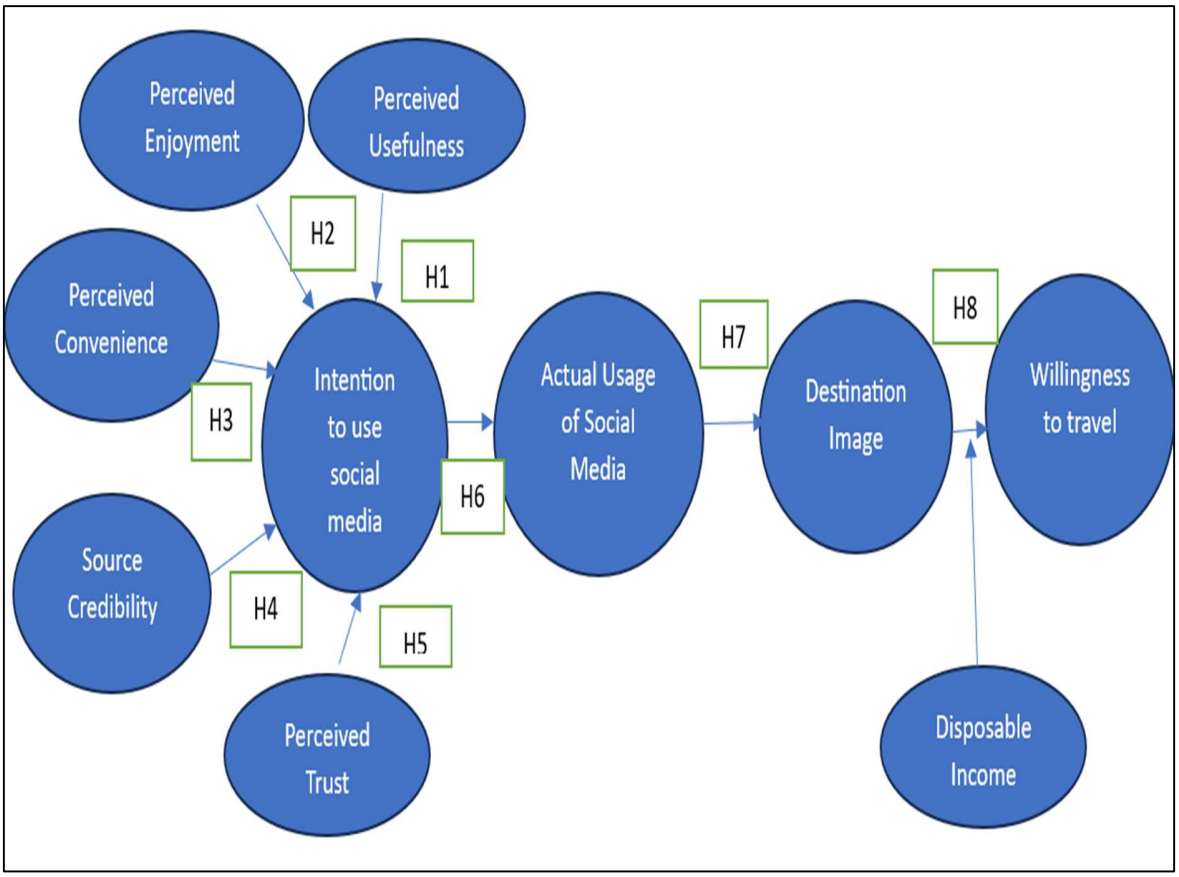

Figure 1: PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL MODEL

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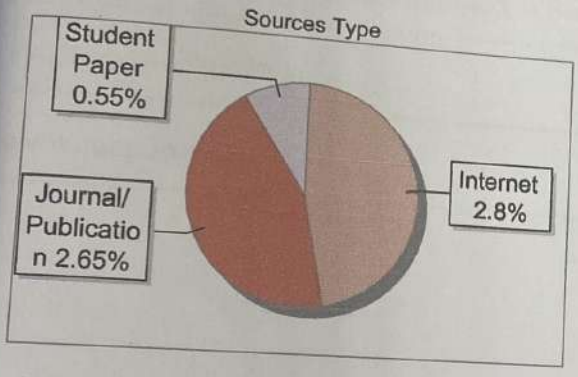

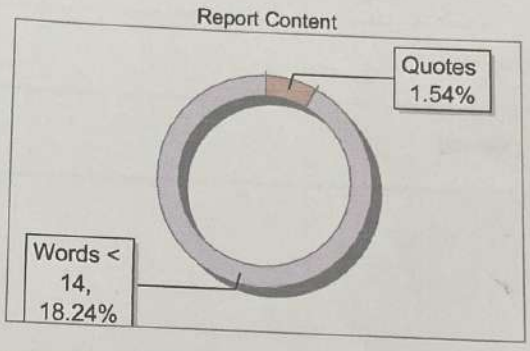

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Annexure-4

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN BUILDING TOURISM DESTINATION IMAGE AND WILLINGNESS TO TRAVEL AMONG GENERATION Z

SHORT SYNOPSIS

By

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ABSTRACT

In normal circumstances, the term travel means when one person moves from one place to another and the reason for the same can be multiple. An individual can move with the intention of fun, work, education, or it can also be leisure. Post COVID-19 the most common pattern observed among people about tourism is "wanderlust". Wanderlust can be referred as a phenomenon when people get bored with their mundane lives due to the lockdown and think of going to any destination for fun or leisure. It is also observed that the tourism industry has become an industry whose contribution to the country's growth has increased. At present the concept of Tourism 4.0 has become a trendsetter. When the term Tourism 4.0 comes it is

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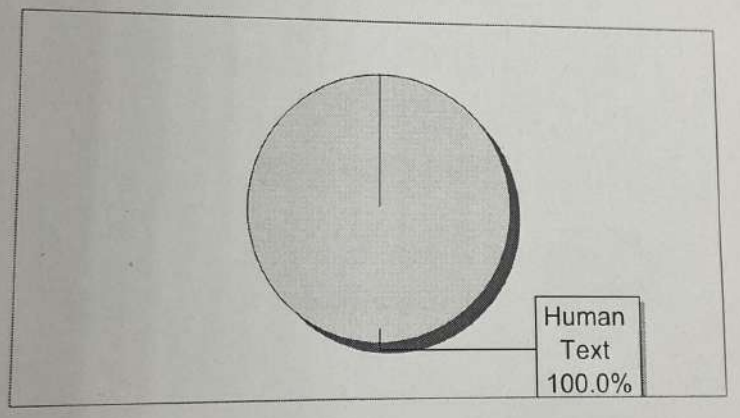

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